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DELIVER UPON OPENING
OF BUSINESS -

1975 DEC 2 21 41

R445R 15149)1UIVUIVWYD
URGENT***** MIDEAST - SOVIET

Hyland, LL

MOSCOW, DEC 2, REUTER - SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER ANDREI GROMYKO TODAY APPEARED TO REJECT A U.S. PROPOSAL FOR A PRELIMINARY MEETING TO PRECEDE A GENEVA MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE, WHICH HE SAID WOULD ONLY EVADE THE QUESTION OF A FULL GENEVA GATHERING.

IN A KREMLIN DINNER SPEECH, MR GROMYKO SAID THE CONVOCAATION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WITH FULL AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) WAS THE MOST RELIABLE PATH TO PEACE IN THE AREA.

AS QUOTED BY THE TASS NEWS AGENCY, HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE U.S. PROPOSAL OF BILATERAL TALKS, DELIVERED TO MOSCOW YESTERDAY, BUT HIS REMARKS WERE SEEN HERE AS A CLEAR REJECTION OF THE IDEA.

MORE 1553

R446R 15189)2UIVUIVCYN
MIDEAST - SOVIET 2 MOSCOW

THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID IN WASHINGTON TODAY THAT A NOTE DELIVERED TO THE KREMLIN SAID THE UNITED STATES WOULD CONSIDER THE IDEA OF PREPARATORY TALKS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, BUT ALSO RULED OUT PLO PARTICIPATION WITHOUT AGREEMENT OF ALL SIDES CONCERNED.

ISPAEL, A PARTICIPANT IN THE LONG-DORMANT GENEVA FORUM, HAS REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO HAVE ANY DEALINGS WITH THE PLO, WHICH IT HAS CALLED A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO THE ANNIHILATION OF THE JEWISH STATE.

IN AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO THE U.S. SUGGESTION, MR GROMYKO SAID THAT "SOME PEOPLE" CONSIDERED IT EXPEDIENT TO CONVENE A "SO-CALLED UNOFFICIAL PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE IN VIEW OF THE SOVIET UNION'S PROPOSAL (MADE EARLIER THIS MONTH) ON CONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE."

"THE IDEA OF THIS MEETING CANNOT BE QUALIFIED AS ANYTHING BUT AN EVASION OF CONVENING THE CONFERENCE," HE SAID.

MORE 1555

R447R 15196)1UIVUIVZSA
MIDEAST - SOVIET 3 MOSCOW

"IT IS SAID THAT THE HOLDING OF A PRELIMINARY MEETING WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO AVOID PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSING THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM AT SUCH A CONFERENCE. BUT WHO EVER SAID THAT THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN ANY MEETING AND ANY CONFERENCE?" HE ASKED.

THE CALLING OF AN OFFICIAL CONFERENCE OR UNOFFICIAL MEETING WOULD NOT REMOVE THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION, HE SAID, "AND AS IT IS SO, IT IS USELESS ARTIFICIALLY TO PILE UP OBSTACLES TO THE CONVOCAATION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND INDULGE IN A KIND OF POLITICAL GYMNASTICS."

MR GROMYKO'S REMARKS CAME IN A SPEECH WELCOMING KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTER SHEIKH SARAH AL-AHMAD AS-SARAH TO MOSCOW. THEY WERE DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEWS OF THE U.S. SUGGESTION WAS RELEASED IN WASHINGTON.

REUTER 1556